NEW LIGHT ON THE ASSASSINATION: A SECRET AGENT'S STORY

More light on President Kennedy's assassination comes from a Japanese agent's report to his Government, published here for the first time. The agent was assigned to the FBI investigation of the Kennedy-Oswald murders because the Japanese feared a wave of assassinations in Japan. Glenn Troelstrup, in the Tokyo Bureau of "U. S. News & World Report," talked to the agent and sent this dispatch.

President Kennedy, as the assassin's bullets struck

TOKYO

In January, the Japanese Government secretly assigned a special security agent from the Japanese national police to join quietly with the American FBI in its investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy.

The agent was 33-year-old Atsuyuki Sassa. I have just spent four hours with agent Sassa and Kuniyasu Tsuchida, director of the Tokyo metropolitan police guard division.

Only one man. It may take more than the Warren Commission report to convince many people that the assassination was not part of a larger conspiracy. The official report to the Japanese Government, however, holds that President Kennedy was shot by Lee Harvey Oswald and that it was the "impulsive act" of that one man.

Said agent Sassa: "President Kennedy was hit by a steel-jacketed high-powered bullet. It hit the back of the skull, pushing ahead a skull fragment the size of a quarter through the side of his brain.

"A sliver off the bullet came out of the lower left of the neck, giving rise to early speculation that it was from a shot made from in front of the car."

Sassa continued: "President Kennedy was dead before he arrived at the hospital. If he had not been a President, no doctor would have tried an operation."

Then why was it attempted? "There was one chance in a million he could be revived," Sassa said.

"There have been one or two examples of similar head injuries resulting from auto accidents in which the victims miraculously survived. So the operation was carried out for three reasons:

"A miracle chance to revive the President.

"To make use of time—an hour or more—to ensure the safety and departure from the area of Vice President Johnson.

"To permit last rites of the Catholic Church to be carried out before an official death was recorded."

In refutation—. At this point, Sassa tore into what he called the "emotionally imaginative speculations" of American expatriate writer Thomas Buchanan, which are being widely circulated in Asia. Buchanan has theorized that Oswald and Jack Ruby were hirelings of wealthy U. S. right-wing interests who connived with the Dallas police to carry out the assassination.

Refuting Buchanan's theories, Sassa reported, are these facts:

"The bullet sliver wound on the President's neck left a scar so clean it was overlooked at first. Then it was thought it might be an entrance wound from a shot fired in front of the President's car. Later, however, the sliver was found on the car floor. Its route was traced in the autopsy. But even without that evidence, to make such a wound from the front the assassin would have had to lie on the pavement ahead of the car. Also his shot would have had to penetrate the front windshield.

"No shot from a nearby bridge could have made such a hit.

"The accusers say that three shots cannot be fired from a telescopic-sight equipped, high-powered rifle in slightly over five seconds. Well, the FBI officially timed the shooting as taking over six seconds—from 6.5 to 6.6 seconds. Also remember that you count after the first shot is squeezed. That means Buchanan contends two more shots couldn't be fired accurately in about 6 seconds. Do you see the psychological falsification or trap in the Buchanan argument? Any marksman can do what was done and hit the target. Any nonexpert can do it and come close. Remember the President's car was moving slowly away from the assassin. His telescopic sight cut the distance down to about one fourth of its actual length.

"The trick in firing successive shots with a telescopic sight is to let the rifle rock upward and back into position for firing without ever taking your eye off the sight and the point where the sight cross hairs intersect. This fact is so well known among police officials that I'll tell you frankly that there is absolutely nothing we can do in Japan to prevent the assassination of some important person by some rifleman similar to Oswald."

Fear in Japan. Sassa then paused to explain that the Japanese have had a number of assassination attempts and that there was fear of a chain reaction from the President's assassination.

"You see," he said, "these things usually come in strings. We have had a number of assassination attempts in Japan over the past decade. We feared

the next tries would be made with high-powered rifles. So I was sent to join the FBI's assassination investigation."

Role of Tippit. Sassa turned again to Buchanan's writings:

"Buchanan holds that Policeman Tippit [J.D. Tippit, killed by Oswald about an hour after the President's assassination] was in on a right-wing plot to kill Kennedy. But let's look at the facts:

"There are over a thousand men on the Dallas police force. More than half were assigned to guard the President. Buchanan says Tippet was driving alone, something unusual.

"Of course it was unusual not to have two men in a police cruiser. But the reason is that half of the force was on guard duty."

Sassa also said this about police work at the time of the assassination:

"The FBI and Dallas police were concentrating their surveillance on some 20 potentially dangerous ultrarightists in the Dallas area. They were not paying much attention to leftists. Recent assaults, such as that upon Adlai Stevenson, had been made by rightist elements. We've made the same mistake in Japan. I served as a bodyguard for Russia's Anastas Mikoyan, for example. We watched the rightists, not leftists.

"I met a number of Dallas policemen who were frequently in Ruby's place [Jack Ruby shot Oswald to death two days after the President's assassination], and regularly accepted free drinks. No good policeman leaves without paying for his own drinks no matter what the deal is with the management. But I could find no indication of any police connivance in exposing Oswald to possible assassination. In any security operation there's *yudan* (negligence). It's always obvious later. We are guilty of this in Japan too. In retrospect, we've done some foolish things."

Oswald: beatings and hatred. As for Oswald, the accused assassin of President Kennedy, agent Sassa said this:

"Oswald tried to preserve a small Russia in his own home. He beat Marina [his Russian-born wife] if she wore lipstick or any other kind of makeup. He demanded that she never speak English in their home and that she never wear gay American clothes.

"In Washington, the FBI psychiatrists noted that Oswald obviously hated his father for abandoning him. So, Oswald readily disliked anyone who wielded authority. He probably saw his own father in President Kennedy."

Agent Sassa said his report concludes that the assassination "was not planned much in advance. Oswald apparently got the idea after the President's visit to Dallas was announced. All evidence points to the shooting as a completely impulsive act. Oswald was not a man who could prepare or plan things. He was too unstable."

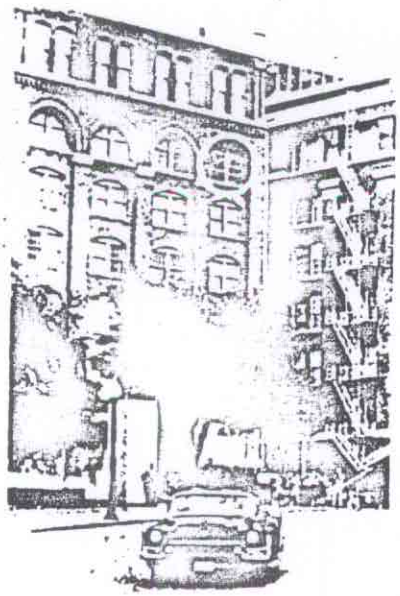
In the words of agent Sassa, that is the core of his official report to the Japanese Government.

The findings of Japanese Agent Sassa, who now has been transferred to a different Japanese agency, agree in all respects with the facts of the Kennedy assassination as they have been made known in the U. S.

On May 24 investigators for the Warren Commission re-enacted the assassination in Dallas, in order to prove, with photographs and other evidence, that the bullets fired at the President could have come only from the Texas School Book Depository Building, and not from in front of the car.

"The Dallas Times Herald" said the re-enactment proved conclusively that if the bullets had been fired from in front of the car they would have had to go through the limousine's windshield to hit either the President or Governor John Connally who was wounded by one of the assassin's bullets.

Results of the re-enactment will be part of the report by the Warren Commission. Headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, the commission was appointed by President Johnson to find and tell all the facts about the assassination.



In re-enactment of Kennedy assassination in Dallas, federal agents sought to determine beyond all doubt exactly how tragedy occurred. At left: Circle shows window of school-depository building where assassin fired. Bottom: White marks on agents show where bullets hit the President, left, Texas Governor Connally, right.

—Wide World Photos